



Harvest

Welcome.

Opening Scripture

Hymn mp 106 Come ye faithful people comes

Scripture Reading Ps 104

Prayer / share time

Reading Luke 15:11-32

Hymn mp 732 We plough the fields and scatter

Sermon *Being thankful*

Hymn mp 486 Now thank we all our God

Closing prayer

Close -----

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The audio file is [20_09_27.mp3](#)

Mp 666 the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases

Welcome, pray

■ In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston. Edward Spencer from Evanston, Illinois, was part of a life-saving squad, he waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him. Would that be you? *Our Daily Bread, Feb 20, 1994.*

✚ **Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Ingratitude is widespread.**

So – Harvest is a time to think about being ‘thankful’, having a thankful heart. The question is: ‘Do you have a thankful heart?’

What do you have that you did not receive? 1Co 4:7 You and I all receive one good thing after another, we are on the receiving end - every good thing comes from to us heaven above, from God's good and generous hand.

1st a reminder - What do you have, yes now, today? food in the fridge – and in your tummy, clothes you are wearing, and at home, is your wardrobe full? Overflowing? how many pairs of shoes do you have? We need some essentials but most homes are filled with big screens, electronics, labour saving devices, and all sort of frivolous non-essentials, etc. etc.

In our complex modern civilization, the link between the things we need and the loving providence of God is gone. Millions of people live in cities far removed from the land where, in more primitive days people grew their own food. Now it comes to us from shops in busy streets, often far away from the factories where the food we eat or the clothes we wear are prepared.

That is why we have a harvest service. The value of the annual festival of harvest is to restore this link. It makes us think of the harvest field with its golden grain and ask the questions that opens the road to God. Where did it come from? The farmer certainly did not create it. Whatever modern methods of cultivation we now have, whatever chemical agents we may have learned to employ, none can either manufacture a grain of wheat or make it germinate and multiply into a huge crop. **To stop, look and consider, opens a window on the goodness of God.**

■ "How beautiful!" said a boy to his father as they stood enraptured by the glory of a blazing sunset. But the father replied, "That is more than beautiful; that is the glory of God."

Something of this must come back to us as we look at the bread on our table – our Sunday lunch - or else our daily lives becomes cheapened and impoverished

*Behind the loaf is the snowy flour,
And behind the flour the mill,
And behind the mill is the sun and the shower,
And the seed and the Father's will.*

✚ **The harvest speaks to us of the liberality, the generousness, of God.**

Today in singing harvest songs we thank God for all his goodness. How about tomorrow - will you then be coming quickly to the Lord to thank him?

Will you open your mouth in thanks to God for all you have received??

✚ **Being thankful is having a grateful attitude or an 'Attitude of gratitude'**

Like those rescued from drowning - Jesus speaks of ten lepers who were all healed of a terrible – and fatal – skin disease. Ten were made clean – one came back to say thank you. One only **Where are the other nine!?** Jesus asks (Luke 17:11-19)

The harvest speaks to us of the benevolence of God, His care for the needs of all that he has made, whoever they are - or whatever they have done.

Prodigal son

Our main passage this morning (Luke 15:11-32) is known as the prodigal son story. **"Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering round to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable"** Lu 15:1-3

Jesus told it to show how willing God is to receive and forgive repentant sinners. When the wayward son returns – he is welcomed. It is something the Pharisees watching would not do to their children. So too today, especially in pride/shame cultures. Also in the crowd were those who were obvious sinners, far from God - should they turn - they would be received.

There are two groups, each son represents one group: First the younger

First son...

He says: **'Father, give me my share of the estate.'** ... **"Give me my share".** I'm owned the money **"Give me my".** Do you know people like that who say: **"Give me my money"**, it's mine. He thought that everything should come to him, he was owed it after all, he should have it. There are many like

that, those who believe everything they have is owed to them. I expect it. - I must have it - I should have it. Is that you?

But what of the father? He knew the son well and loved him very much, he knew what was best for him. So when his son comes and says: **'Father, give me my share of the estate.'** He would surely think to himself, I know what he is like, If I give it to him now he will surely waste it. Dads w.w.y.d?

So why does the father give him the money when he will most likely squander it. Why? Because God is generous to all. God will not become a dictator, forcing obedience and thereby turning human beings into robots.

The prodigal's father would not do it. Instead he stood back in the infinite patience of love. Let life open the young man's eyes through the ruin he had made of it and turned his steps homewards. The father never lost patience and in the end his love succeeded.

A good God we are told **causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** Mt 5:45 God is good to all.

To us nature seems neutral, and it can leave us confused. For "The rain will help the crops grow - whether the farmer is a good man - or a bad man.

Some refuse to acknowledge God's goodness from morning till dusk. Ignore him all week, never give a moment's thought to say thank you – and he will still give you good things. He is generous to those who never say: thank you

The fact that the sun shines on the evil as well as the good is not a sign that God does not care. It is a sign of His benevolent love. The story of the father's kindness to his prodigal son is a picture of how Jesus thinks of God. Love trusts, love gives - without attaching conditions. He knew his son to be headstrong, willful, thoughtless, and that he might use the money to ruin himself. But he handed over the money and let him go. How incredible, few of us would have done it. Yet that is exactly how God deals with each of us.

And yes the foolish son squanders all the money until he has none left. He had to lose it to realise it, it's the only way he would come to his right mind.

The Son was fed up, so he packed up, he had a rave up, then he became hard up, so he joined up, and realised he had messed up. He woke up, he looked up, he rose up and he owned up. The one sick of home - became homesick

Because the young man did not recognize the giver of gifts – he misused them. All who do not acknowledge the giver invariably misuse the gifts.

- The more our society ignores the giver - the more misuse we see. In our minds, bodies, money and possessions. Life itself becomes dispensable. There are over 200,000 abortions annually in the UK, 98% for reasons of convenience. In a state in Canada where Euthanasia, the killing of older people, is allowed, a high % cited 'not being a burden to others' as the reason. Research into embryology and genetics is driven to suit my wants. I will tailor everything to suit me, sex, gender, the family, etc.

Having things should make us think of God. Having things should awaken in us two other important aspects one is to think and the other to thank. The two words spring from the same root. To be aware of from whom everything comes from should make you grateful. To think is to thank.

✚ **Don't think - and you won't thank**

- Do you sit down to eat and tuck in straight away without a moment's thought. Young girl said she wanted to give thanks before food. Parents?

Who do you thank? Yourself? Some do. Maybe when the money comes in you say like the prodigal son, "I'm owed it". That benefit is my entitlement. We have no 'entitlement'. The moment we sinned we forfeited the right to any 'entitlement'.

If only the son had thought, that would have saved him from using the father's gifts to indulge his selfish appetites. It would have filled his heart with love and gratitude and enabled him to withstand temptation. If he had thought of the giver - he would have used the gifts well. So to with you and I. Let us receive from the hand of God with thanksgiving and reverence.

Everything God gives is to be used for his Glory – and be shared with others

Son 2

This son is obedient to the father, helpful at home, doesn't wish to go off after pleasure, he is content with what he has..... NO, not at all!

That is how it seems, that is how he wanted it to appear, but it is all a façade

The truth is he is bitter, and says to his father, **'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.**

Yet you never gave me anything! x2 Is that right? The older son had everything - but he refused to see it.

He could see - but wouldn't see – he was blind and had to be told: **"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.**

This religious man lived as a son in his father's house and no doubt to everyone around - all looked well. But inside Oh, he was angry, jealous, bitter, ungrateful and proud. This brother is jealous of the father's kindness blind to all his many blessings

So why did Jesus give this story with two sons?

Remember there are two groups watching.

On one side are the **"the tax collectors and "sinners"**. These are those whose sins are obvious sins – yes they are far from God. They are on the broad road, the dirty side - unfaithful, immoral, they swear and use bad language, they steal from others, they make no attempt or pretension of being godly.

They are represented in the first son. Here is one who goes off far from God to sin openly in bad living. Immoral maybe, a selfish pleasure seeker certainly. They had no regard for honesty, faithfulness, godliness. Their motto is **"Give me my share" - "Give me"**

On the other side are the second group. The second son represents the proud Pharisees. Proud because there is the pretense of godliness - but there's no love for God in their hearts. He too is on the broad road – it's the clean side. Like a nominal Christian, it's a pretense. Self-absorbed there is inside: thoughtlessness, pride, jealousy and anger.

Notice how this second son he looks down on the other son, **30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes.** Without any grounds for doing so, amplifies the sins of his brother.

Remembered what triggered with story?? **the Pharisees and the teachers of the law they muttered**, in other words they said I'm not a sinner like 'them'!

To those who, like this son say **"You never gave me anything"** will never see God's grace. **Those who do not see their sin – will never see God's grace.**

✚ **There were two groups listening then, - as you are listening now. Which group would you be in? which son are you most like?**

One has open obvious sins, the other secret sins. One sins outwardly, the other inwardly. Pride, jealousy and bitterness are sins hidden from others – but open before God. With different types of sin, they are both lost sons,

The difference here is that the one who sins openly repents. He sees his foolishness which is so clearly before him, he turns around and confesses his sins against the God of heaven.

The second son, the one who thinks he can hide his sin doesn't repent. That is why Jesus reserves such strong language for the Pharisees, for they are living a double life, a deluded life - but God can see it all. They have to be told – and even then the blinded-ness of pride blocks the message.

They may not sin visibly – but all sin is sin in the heart – whether there's action or not. No external action - does not mean - no sin. God's call to repentance is a call to repent of the sin in your heart.

Gospel

Push God into the background, never think to thank God - and he will still give you good things – and on and on – but one day it will stop.

Enough is enough. Don't turn to Christ when you could – and the suddenly the sand will run through the hour glass and the end will rush upon you.

God is generous and gives good things to all. We all like to receive those good things. The question is will you also receive the giver?

God's great gift is Jesus Christ. CROSS Is this a gift you have received? Will you take Him more fully and freely than you have those other gifts?

What do you have that you did not receive? 1Co 4:7 Yes actually there is one thing than comes from me – my sin. **My sin is not from God - but from me.**

Not thanking God is a sin. God's two charges against us all; yes all of us is that we **neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him**, Ro 1:21. That is we don't thank God, nor give him the Glory for who he is and what he does.

The young son as he turned for home thought: **I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.**' 18,19

He is saying '**Make me your slave**' He would happily be a slave. He had been a slave to sin and that was miserable. Do not treat sin lightly, for sin is a hard cruel taskmaster. All who sin becomes slaves to sin.

- Whether it's obvious or whether its secret; jealous enslaves, greed enslaves, 'my image' enslaves, every pursuit of pleasure will trap you.

✚ This young man thought; "I would rather be a slave in my father's house than believe myself lord of this world's delights"

The man had made up his mind - he had his lines ready "**I have sinned against heaven and against you**" here is one with a contrite, broken and repentant heart. Heaven first, it must always be. It's his law I have broken.

The result? He was welcomed into the kingdom of God. God will never turn anyone away who comes to him with a **broken and contrite heart**. Ps 51:17

That one leper who came back to Jesus - He was not only made clean on the outside - but he is made completely well, clean on the inside, forgiven.

✚ God could see his humble repentant heart and he was received.

If you have received this Grace from the Lord then thank him '**Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.**' Ps 100:4 "Ah this I do not feel like doing" I hear you say

When the night is darkest, those lights of God's goodness shine more brightly

"In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, and average of fifteen a day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children: '**Now thank we all our God, With heart and hands and voices; Who wondrous things had done, In whom His world rejoices. Who, from our mother's arms, Hath led us on our way, With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.**'" Here was a man who knew thanksgiving comes from the love of God, not from outward circumstances. *Don Maddox.*

There is always something to thank God for, material things - you may - or may not have. Paul **I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.**

Love, joy, forgiveness, hope through Jesus Christ are the true lasting gifts from God. With these we can join with Paul who sang hymns of praise and thanks to God at midnight while chained in the squalid recesses of a jail.

Be thankful with me to the one who saved my life, not from drowning but from a lost eternity, & brought me to His kingdom of everlasting life & joy.

Let's us now with grateful hearts, sing that hymn: 'Now thank we all our God, With heart and hands and voices; _____end